

**The Influence of Research on Policy:
The case of MIMAP Senegal**

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by
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INTRODUCTION

Policy Influence has long been a target of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) programming. In order to better understand what "policy influence" and "policy impact" is, the Centre's Evaluation Unit has undertaken a study to review the role that research has in the policy making process. More specifically, the study looks at three questions: (1) What constitutes policy influence in IDRC's experience; (2) To what degree, and in what ways, has IDRC-supported research influenced public policy; and (3) What factors and conditions have facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence potential. By reviewing a series of 25 projects that have received the Centre's support over the last decade, patterns and key issues are expected to be drawn.

This initiative includes three studies that look at the Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Program. This support was granted by IDRC to help developing countries build a knowledge base to measure and analyse poverty, and design programs and policies to meet economic stabilization targets while alleviating poverty and reducing vulnerability. One of the newest members of the MIMAP network, Senegal is particular in that much of its efforts have been directed toward the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and as such the team has been working closely with the relevant National Ministries.

Drawing on a number of documents that fed into a previous draft, this report contemplates the Centre's internal documents, the Project Approval Document, and external documents such as project reports to its other Canadian donor, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).¹ Interviews with key players were conducted in Senegal by Fred Carden of the Evaluation Unit, and transcribed for use herein.

This study attempts to unravel the role that the MIMAP research has in the decision-making process and in national policy influence. The introduction briefly reviews the broader MIMAP framework and what its objectives are. It also presents a snapshot of the national political, economical and social context that brought the MIMAP program to Senegal, and what the project has involved in the last two years.

Subsequent sections address policy influence more specifically. An outline of the policy process for poverty initiatives before the program began is compared with a new reality stemming from MIMAP's involvement the PRSP process. Considering its short run, this is particularly encouraging as it has significantly altered the decision making process to involve collaborative effort between researcher and policy makers.

Following is a section on the various types of policy influence according to who is influenced, in what way, and the final implications on programs and policies. This section reviews how research can expand capacity building, broaden policy horizons, and change policy regimes. Supporting examples from the project are included.

The various types of policy influence are affected both positively and negatively by a series of internal and external factors. Addressing each in turn, the section concludes with a table summarizing eight factors: key individuals, technical capacities, perception, dissemination, timing, communications, institutional issues and national hurdles.

¹ A previous draft of this work was commissioned to Kirit Parikh, 2002.

THE MIMAP SENEGAL PROGRAM

The Broader MIMAP Initiative

The Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) program came about in response to the difficulties many developing countries were having in meeting structural adjustment targets and maintaining sustained growth. National measures included reduced public spending, devalued currencies, and liberalized trade and financial sectors. These macroeconomic changes had drastic and unintended effects on the poor and vulnerable, further brought to light by publications of various international bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. While tools were developed for measuring and monitoring poverty and for modeling national economics, their use suffered from the limited involvement of national actors.

In 1990 IDRC launched the MIMAP program in the Philippines with the aim of developing a local knowledge base and capacities that could sustain efforts to measure poverty and analyse the impacts of macroeconomic policies and shocks. Bangladesh, the other MIMAP initiative reviewed in IDRC's larger study, started in 1992. The program spread to include six other Asian countries, and subsequently, five countries in Africa.²

Senegal in Context

Independent from France in 1960, Senegal later joined with the Gambia to form the nominal confederation of Senegambia in 1982. However, the envisaged integration of the two countries was never carried out, and the union was dissolved in 1989. After 40 years of independence under a single administration, Abdoulaye Wade was elected president by popular vote for a five-year term and a new constitution was adopted in January 2001. Senegal is now a republic under multiparty democratic rule.

Since the 1980s, Senegal's economy has been confronted with a series of structural problems manifested in low economic growth, strong internal demand and chronic deficit in balance of payments, and instability in public finances. A certain macroeconomic stability was achieved through a number of macro-adjustments in the 1980s and 90s, however one continues to see serious deterioration in the quality of life of many Senegalese households.

In 1991/92, the *Social Dimensions of Adjustments* program estimated 33% of the population was living below the poverty level.³ A 2001 estimate indicated nearly 2/3 of the country's inhabitants are now considered poor with 54% of its population living below the poverty line. Senegal is classified as among the 20 poorest countries in the world.⁴

² MIMAP support has been provided to the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Nepal, Laos, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Benin, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Ghana. (IDRC brochure)

³ IDRC Project Approval Document for MIMAP Senegal. p.2.1999.

⁴ Parikh 2002.

In January 1994, Senegal undertook a bold and ambitious economic reform program with the support of the international donor community. This reform began with the currency, the CFA franc (previously linked at a fixed rate to the French franc) being devalued by 50%. Government price controls and subsidies were dismantled. After seeing its economy contract by 2.1% in 1993, Senegal made an important turnaround with the reform program, obtaining real growth in its gross domestic product (GDP) averaging 5% annually during 1995-2001. Annual inflation had been pushed down to less than 1%, but rose to an estimated 3.3% in 2001. Investment rose steadily from 13.8% of GDP in 1993 to 16.5% in 1997.

As is the case in many African countries, the number of poor people continue to rise even though increases in GDP have been detected. Data on poverty in Senegal indicates an important rural context with more than 80% of the poor living in rural areas. Agriculture and industrial development have been relatively stagnant, credit schemes have been limited and the role of the private sector has not expanded as envisioned following the devaluation. Given this scenario, Senegal was a likely candidate to join the MIMAP network

MIMAP in Senegal

. IDRC had been involved in institution building in West Africa since the 1980's, and one of the institutions supported was the Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliqué (CREA) when it was quite weak and largely inactive. Abdoulaye Diagne, CREA's director, advocated for a research arm within the University's Economics Department, and secured IDRC support to rebuild CREA. In the latter 1990's, CREA started to work with the Ministry of Education but without IDRC support, CREA probably wouldn't have continued this work with them as payments took too long and they would have had to halt work long before its completion date.⁵

Co-financing for MIMAP had been confirmed with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) a few months before IDRC's formal approval, and the project was accelerated at the request of CIDA who had been involved throughout the discussions. MIMAP Senegal started in June 2000 with the general objective of improving research on issues of macroeconomics and poverty analysis. More specifically, it aimed to:

- (1) construct a profile of the poverty in Senegal and develop a monitoring system;
- (2) develop tools to analyse the impact of macroeconomic policies on income distribution;
- (3) specifically study: poor people's access to financial services, the gender dimension of poverty, and the relation between education and poverty.
- (4) encourage dialogue among development actors working in the fight against poverty (researchers, policy makers, NGOs and financiers).

The research team was comprised of 10 professors and doctoral students from CREA as well as from the Office of Statistics. It benefits from two advisory committees, one designed to manage administrative questions, and the other to approve the research program and assure its visibility and availability for use by decision makers. The latter incorporates representative of different Ministries and national and international organizations.

⁵ Diagne 2002.

The following figures illustrates the framework originally proposed and introduces the project's different axes.

Figure 1: Program Outline

	Theme	Researcher
Module 1 : Poverty Profile	Literature Review and construction of a unified base of findings	The entire MIMAP Team Sidy Gueye (DPS) Mamadou Thiongane (DPS)
	Poverty Measurement	Abdoulaye Diagne Fatou Cisse Abdourahmane Ndiaye
	Income Distribution Measurement	Ousmane Seck Malick Sane
	Monitoring System to follow the causes of poverty and income gaps.	Sidy Gueye Momar Sylla (DPS) Mamadou Thiam
Module 2 : Modeling of Policy Impact on Income Distribution	Construction of a MCS	Abdoulaye Diagne Mamadou Dansokho Mamadou Thionghane Ousmane Seck Fatou Cisse
	Construction of a General Equilibrium (GCE) Model	Abdoulaye Diagne Mamadou Dansokho Mamadou Thionghane Ousmane Seck Fatou Cisse
Module 3 : Thematic Studies	The Gender Dimensions of Poverty in Senegal	Marie Susanne Badji Gaye Daffe
	Education, Equality, and the Fight Against Poverty	Gaye Daffe Abdourahmane Ndiaye Abdoulaye Diagne
	Poverty and Access to Credit	Mouhamadou Bocar Sall Malick Sane Aziz Wane

MIMAP started quietly with the project. Just a few months into the project, Diagne, the MIMAP project leader, was made aware of the country's requirement to produce a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper or PRSP. This requirement was being contemplated at about the same time that IDRC expanded the MIMAP network to include Senegal.

Senegal was eligible for a new program led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to alleviate debt, and benefit from new loans. However, to be eligible, these Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) were each required to submit a proposal on how the various national actors intended to use newly available funds to reduce poverty. In line with other countries, Senegal established poverty reduction programs and in 1997, presented a strategy for poverty reduction based on 4 main objectives: (1) revenue generation and employment increase through micro enterprise; (2) improved access to basic social services; (3) promotion of women in economic development; and (4) capacity building in rural communities and improved monitoring of household status.

A number of factors seem to have been involved with the joining of these two initiatives, that is, MIMAP and the PRSP. For example the project team included policy makers that would be involved with the PRSP process. There is also important reference to a project monitor Gerard Gagnon who saw the CREA/MIMAP work complementary to the PRSP needs, brought it to the attention of policy makers, and acted as a catalyst to initiate collaboration between the Statistics Office, CIDA, IDRC and the project director (who was also the director of CREA). Eventually, various stakeholders were brought into the PRSP project. CREA played a critical research role in the process.⁶

A very timely poverty analysis workshop took place in November 2000 at which 7 members of the CREA team attended, and with this CREA's work in the PRSP began.⁷ To a large extent, the originally planned MIMAP activities were put on the back burner – the donor officers supported the PRSP work and were flexible in accommodating this need.

The bottom line is that the PRSP process made active use of CREA data and studies – a contribution which was praised on a number of counts. The PRSP recommendations are based on CREA findings, illustrating the importance of the work in influencing policy, particularly in Senegal's poverty reduction strategy.⁸ CREA's help made the PRSP document written by Senegalese and not foreigners, establishing ownership which is expected to make implementation easier.

To date, the main policy impact of MIMAP in Senegal is due to its involvement with the PRSP. Before moving on to more specific attention to aspects of policy influence, there are two further points that should be made. The first is the apparent interchangeability between CREA and MIMAP which to a certain extent complicates causality. Second, and related to the first, is that IDRC support to CREA started some years earlier and has contributed significantly to the direct and indirect impact of MIMAP and other work with national bodies. CREA has played an important role in the design the new education policy in Senegal. Part of the support to this process has been funded by other donors but work on education and poverty as part of the MIMAP project has played a significant role

⁶ The PRSP was expected to reflect a consensus among government bodies, local experts, development partners and civil society organizations.

⁷ Comments of Luc Savard on Parikh, 2002.

⁸ Ailou Faye and Racine Kane, 2002. Also Amadou Dia, 2002.

in helping design the policy. Also, CREA was asked to do an impact analysis of liberalization of the groundnut sector in Senegal in collaboration with IDRC by using the CGE model built by the team. There is also on-going discussion for the team to help the Ministry of Agriculture design the reform of the groundnut sector.

POLICY PROCESS AND COMMUNITY

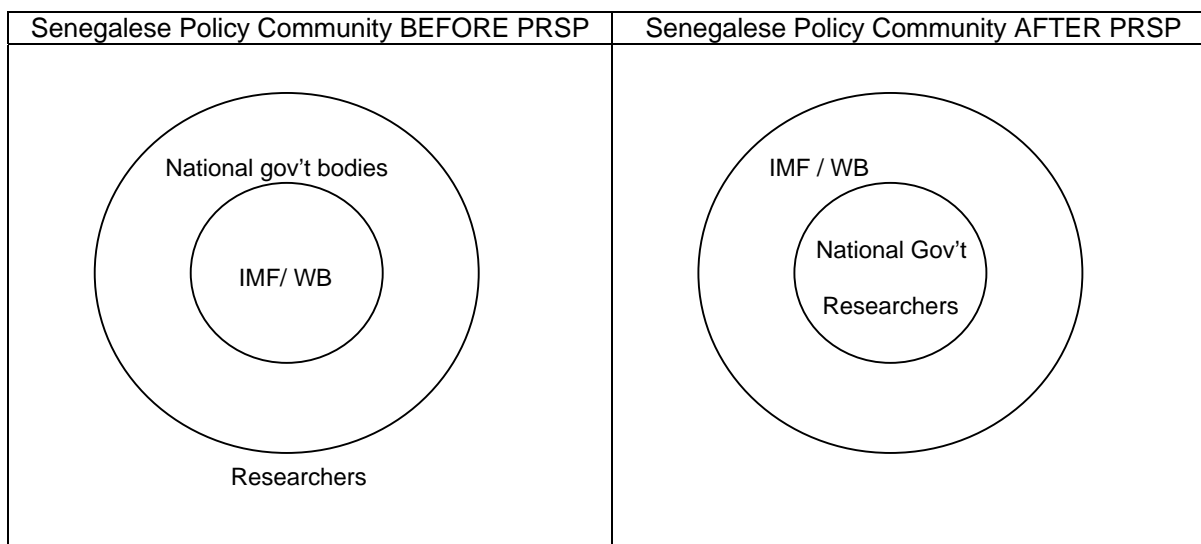
From the start, the project was intended to support the government in its national initiatives in the fight against poverty. Translated from its French version, IDRC's second report to co-financer the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) states "these research works would feed into decision making". However, while reports indicate this objective, interviews revealed that policy influence was not explicitly discussed within the groups.

In order to better understand the relationship between research and decision making, Pross introduced the concept of policy communities to identify the various actors or groups that may exert influence in policy making.⁹ To the extent that CREAs collaboration with the various Ministries was coincidental (others did not view it as accidental at all), what is important to note here is that the policy community changed. Before the PRSP, national researchers were largely ignored by policy makers and economic policy research was directed primarily by staff of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.¹⁰ As illustrated in figure 2, the involvement of national researchers in the PRSP is a critical case of change in the policy community.

⁹ See Lindquist, Evert., *Discerning Policy Influence: Frameworks for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC Supported Research*. University of Victoria. September 2001. p.6.

¹⁰ In addition to coming up in various interviews, the program objections have a similar connotation indicating that the project aim to build national analytical capacities on questions that were generally handled by foreign economists from the WB and the IMF. IDRC 2002 p. 1.

Figure 2: Changes in the Policy Community



Whereas national bodies rarely consulted research before, except for the occasional consultancy, several of the MIMAP researchers were also public administrators therefore resulting in a policy process that was much more interactive. Not only did the administration make their needs known, they were also informed by researchers as to what was needed. Consultation does not end after policy decisions have been made, rather researchers are involved in monitoring and evaluation processes as well.

In an interview, Faye and Kane outlined three levels at which policy influence happens:

1. building the skills and capacities of policy makers
2. influencing those who will influence policy makers
3. influencing policy makers directly.

Concepts of longer term influence can be considered a form of enlightenment, and more immediate results may be associated with a linear perception of policy processes. This project evidences both. The influence can be seen as linear in that the research was plugged directly into the PRSP process, and enlightening in that other research was perhaps not used immediately but was expected to provide fresh perspective which is likely to influence policy at a latter stage.¹¹

This project has some clean policy implications at the national level as well as at the international level. Most notably of course is the PSRP paper resulting from the collaborative process among government bodies and CREA many of whom were MIMAP researchers. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this policy influence is the fact that it was unintended. While the final result was likely more than the project hoped to achieve, there was a sense of apology that the MIMAP team was not able to keep the original calendar of activities as planned at the outset of the project.

¹¹ Tall, 2002.

TYPES OF POLICY INFLUENCE

While the previous section discusses how research influences policy, this section discusses the forms that such influence takes. This is based on Lindquist's typology that presents three principle classifications. Each of these, *expanding policy capacities*, *broadening policy horizons*, and *affecting policy regimes* are addressed in turn.

Expanding Policy Capacities

The MIMAP project has resulted in improved data and knowledge of the various actors. Capacity was a key element of the proposal, and the various MIMAP activities and training events illustrate efforts towards this. Particular examples include the development of the CGE model and the work that forced a review of the available poverty data. The latter resulted in new and more relevant data on poverty in Senegal: Gueye, a practitioner within the Ministry of Education, noted that because of CREA's requests for information, some of the government departments improved their information collection methods in order to provide what was needed.¹²

CREA's help was noted to effectively delineated the links between macro-economics and poverty alleviation.¹³ While the government was aware that the link between economic growth and poverty reduction existed, the research provided more specific indications of particular sectors needed to be acted on. Similarly, the research informed the Microfinance Department within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy on adjustments to improve the viability of financial mechanisms and structures. It is also expected to provide information on the impact of their policies in regards to poverty alleviation.

Visibility and trust grew with the research, and the team became known for their abilities, establishing CREA as a credible research centre for government work. The researchers trained within the framework of the MIMAP project are now considered as being among the most qualified resource persons in the region.

Broadening Policy Horizons

Many people have benefited from CREA MIMAP in that they have a broader appreciation of the agenda and its processes. These include students, researchers, donors, economic planners and administrators. The meetings under the auspices of "Reflection Day on the Senegalese Economy" were fingered by several particularly useful opportunities for sharing perspectives which made policy makers stop and think. The fresh perspectives provided from the researchers improved work through the introduction of new ideas.

When one of the researchers left the group, he set up a program to link these various poverty alleviation initiatives with links research with decision making. This was assisted by his close contacts with the research community gained largely through his previous work. Similarly, a member of the Steering Committee left his position, yet continues to apply the experience in another initiative in the fight against poverty.

¹² Gueye, 2002.

¹³ Niane commented that the project was able to work on the levers that work in Senegal: specifically trying to understand which ones do work in order to better identify the links between economic growth and poverty reduction. 2002.

Affecting Policy Regimes

Lindquist categorizes influence that results in fundamental redesign or modification of programs as *affecting policy regimes*. Two years is a very short period of time in which this type of policy influence may be expected, yet this project is an excellent example. Linking MIMAP with the PRSP process provided a key opportunity for incorporating research into decision making. CREA/MIMAP were involved throughout the process, but particularly in regards to the data collection and poverty diagnostic. Their work is cited in the final version available from the website.¹⁴

While the PRSP is the most relevant example of research modifying a particular policy, a brief note to policy processes is useful here as well. Though addressed in greater detail in the dedicated section above, this project was key in re-defining the research policy linkages, and work on the PSRP has been a catalyst to improved teamwork and coordination between the various stakeholders. Before the project, the Senegalese administration did not have the habit of integrating researchers, except for the occasional consultancy. Collaborative efforts here resulted in recognition that researchers increase the quality and speed of the work and of the team. This in itself translates into a new framework for collaboration. Indication that this is being taken seriously is in Diagne's comment that the Ministry wants to alter terms of some of their research areas to meet changing needs.

Serving as an example of this collaborative framework, the team was consulted for a critical analysis for the Statistics Office in discussions with the World Bank regarding the selection of a macro-economic model.¹⁵ While other requests have also been forthcoming, the CREA/MIMAP staff is overstretched to help in other areas too.

FACTORS AFFECTING POLICY INFLUENCE

Various factors were presented in the work of the program that have had or may have potential to enhance policy influence or inhibit policy influence. These factors are addressed below.

Key Individuals

The role of key individuals is critical in the success of projects. The CREA/MIMAP leader was well respected and therefore trusted and heard. Real Lavergne considered Diagne a gem. Though his potential was perhaps not fully recognized in previous work together, Lavergne felt Diagne did a great job and really made something of CREA.

The project leader is not the only key figure in paving the MIMAPs claim to fame. The IDRC project officer permitted significant leeway in this project even though the PRSP took over or transformed many of the planned activities. This programming flexibility traces

¹⁴ The official PRSP can be downloaded from the Senegalese Ministry of Finance and Economy (www.finances.gouv.sn). Citations on pgs 17, 23, 24.

¹⁵ IDRC 2002. pg 4.

back to a previous IDRC grant that permitted CREA to continue working with the government.

One further example is a person that was perhaps less key in light of the MIMAP project itself, but quite so in terms of the PRSP and perhaps affected MIMAP's involvement. This is the Director of Statistics whom the then Minister of Finance saw as the most competent person to lead the PRSP rather than leaving it to the "correct" department.

Technical Capacities

In Africa, human capacity is over-extended. The fact that the PRSP was compiled nationally resulted in greater ownership and ease in implementation. However, national experts are too few in number creating a bottleneck in the supply and demand chain. The shortage is exasperated in that these experts are enticed into multilateral agencies or the like, causing other problems related with high staff turnover rates.¹⁶ In the case of MIMAP experience, staff heading elsewhere caused disruption and put the schedule off as new members were being brought in and up to date. This not only affects the quality of the work, but also presents problems for institution building.

Also raised were similar issues of long term capacity building versus short term solutions in the form of quick research results indicating that quick research results will not solve longer term needs for capacity building. Examples of this included short term consulting positions offered by the various lending institutions wherein assignments with a short term focus can drain human capital in that the quality of the researcher's parallel work suffers due to the time spent on consulting.

In any case, capacity and perceived capacity certainly offer potential in the policy arena. As is the case with *key people*, as indicated above, CREA was selected to work with the PRSP because it was seen as a competent economic research centre.¹⁷ Evidence-based results and previous successes open opportunities for policy application.

Perception

Individual or collective perceptions held about people or processes are seen to potentially affect policy influence. In regards to individual perceptions, researchers are considered to "often have their heads in the clouds" and that as a group they are seen as a "closed club".¹⁸ Perhaps a more modern stance, certainly with more potential to enhance influence, was taken up by Tall who sees herself as a researcher as well as a bureaucrat. She participates in data analysis, and recognizing the value of the research work.

Collective perceptions of one community or another have probably fed into individual perceptions. The positive perceptions of the international community towards the document was illustrated in Senegal being selected for a 4-country video-conference sponsored by the World Bank that reviewed strategies and approaches to poverty

¹⁶ Staff turnover issues may also be attributed to the instability and frequent changes in the national machinery.

¹⁷ Dia 2002. Other sources including Sall indicate that CREA had little competition.

¹⁸ Respective quotes attributed to Niane 2002, and Sada Sall 2002.

reduction and hoped to learn from what was going on in each of the countries.¹⁹ Having produced one of the best PRSP document in Africa coupled with the positive reception of the international community, resulted in a very strong sense of pride and ownership.

Faye and Kane noted that simply working with the PSRP is important for policy influence, because of its importance throughout Africa. This arouses questions of policy influence such as how being involved in such an important document will affect those on the team. Though CREA was not visible in society at the onset, it was definitely more so after this work.

Dissemination

Dissemination of research has been less critical in this case than in some other research programs such as the G-24 Technical Support. Apparently, this is because it doesn't need to rope in the decision makers or even appeal to other academics and slowly work into the policy core with a minority view. Certainly research needed to be of high quality and relevant, but its dissemination was more important for building a reputation and establishing credibility than in decision making *per se*.²⁰ Persistence and publication over time creates reputation for quality, credibility, and capacity that in turn lends to greater possibility for policy influence. In fact, it seems that the groups didn't really address policy influence or political issues, but focused mostly on the research itself.²¹ Being in the right place at the right time with a credible reputation meant that dissemination was less critical.

Being interactive, this research had direct access to the policy circles, yet format issues are still important and easily digestible work are favoured over long theoretic work. CREA set up the "Day of Reflection on the Economy of Senegal" which was very well received and its format was influential in reaching policy makers. Faye and Kane specifically indicated that Ministers need short provocative memos to keep the issue in their minds, but the back up documentation is needed by their staff for backup.

Though there is not a massive dissemination of CREA findings, students researchers, donors, economic planners and administrators all benefit. Specifically, the ministry of finance, and notably the social planning group, the Development Strategies Division as using the research. Though CREA was not really visible in society, it was visible where it needed to be.

Time frame

Timing has been a factor that has enhanced the project's influence in the policy arena in that this project presented itself as a window of opportunity. Some researchers at the university had been studying devaluation even though it was considered an impossibility, so when it actually happened, there was no capacity in government to understand it or comment on it and everyone including the President went to the researchers for information.²²

¹⁹ CREA was the focal point for this 2000 event. Dia 2002.

²⁰ Faye and Kane. 2002.

²¹ Sylla. 2002.

²² Sall, 2002.

Collaborative efforts normally take more time, but as there had not been a census since 1988 and no poverty survey since 1970, help was needed urgently if the PRSP was going to be based on real data. Needs were discussed and researchers responded.

However time can also work against policy influence. Capacity creation and institution building also takes time. Expecting quick result from the process can be counterproductive. Training less inexperienced people can be effective, but they need to graduate from being research assistants to coauthors and colleagues of the experienced supervisors. This is unlikely to happen when the projects are done under pressure for quick results.

Similarly, there is a need to spend more time on operationalization of the models (such as the general equilibrium model) once they are developed. They are fine to have but they need to be used. It should be noted that while involvement in PRSP related activities pushed back the calendar of the originally planned activities, they continue to work on originally planned activities which Diagne indicates have increased by 50%.

Communications

While the section on dissemination addresses communicating research results, this section looks at how interpersonal communication (or lack of it) can affect policy influence. The relationships among key people are crucial, as is seen with the CIDA officer who suggested linking CREA into the PRSP process.

Many of the program stakeholders discussed the importance of communication, and many indicated the lack of it. Researchers with their academic focus have a hard time understanding decision makers and constraints of reality. They still run the danger of staying theoretical. Guèye commented that researchers need to take more time to explain themselves to the practitioners so that the latter understand research and how it can help them. Similarly, practitioners need to better understand how to use consultants and researchers to facilitate processes of decision.²³ There are exceptions such as Diagne, but they are still few in number.

While the success of the PRSP lends to a belief of cooperation among researchers and policy makers, there is perhaps less evidence of this than cooperation among key, credible people. However, working on the PRSP has instigated movement on both sides, closing the gap between research and policy makers. The CREA team responded favourably to the interest expressed by the DPS, and shared information well.

It is interesting that focus on communication issues often seemed to market ideas of an institutional framework which would put MIMAP in direct contact, and formally link the work with the Bureau of Statistics.

²³ In his notes, Carden indicates that several interviewees commented they know the value of research in decision-making processes, but that their colleagues do not. See interview notes with Gueye, 2002.

Institutional issues

Focus on institution building has surfaced as a means to enhance policy influence. In the first instance it is useful to review IDRC's role in CREA's development. Institution building was not an IDRC policy, however Lavergne felt that support through CREA could eventually offer significant impact in the region, regardless of its high costs. The CREA/MIMAP experience has addressed both issues simultaneously. Though building research centres takes time, the investment is paying off, evident from when IDRC financing permitted CREA staff to work on government projects when government payments came after months of delay.

Similar reference to institutional issues surface in regards to CREA's position and it having more formal links to the Government. Camara comments that If CREA were institutionally linked, data would be more easily accessible. To date, the links are informal and personal with researchers from the bureau involved in MIMAP activities as experts, but not as Ministry representatives. Diagne also noted he is working on establishing some institutional frameworks to sustain partnerships. An example of this may be a 3 year contract with the Ministry of Education in which they have been commissioned to do a number of studies and prepare an annual report. The framework would mean the group participates in Ministry meetings on related topics. Similarly, now that the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) is a central focus, there are queries circulating as to whether MIMAP could articulate with them as a theoretical and research base.²⁴

National Hurdles

Though Senegal is experiencing more economic and political stability now, these factors still affect the work of the group, whether because of staff turnover or institutional frameworks to sustain partnerships. In order to keep costs down, there has been no renewal in the civil service for many years. This is creating a huge potential problem because of the gap between the senior managers and a very young workforce with nothing in between to take over when the senior managers retire in the near future.

The national context translates into a lack of resources, payment scheduling, coordination among ministries, and changes at the municipal level, all which affect research being used as intended.²⁵

The national urgency of the PRSP sidetracked the originally planned MIMAP work, yet because of this involvement MIMAP has clearly led to a much better and thereby a more effective PRSP in Senegal. Diagne notes they continue to work actively with the Ministry of Finance of course as well. They have been approached by the Ministry of Agriculture but so far have declined to become actively involved with them because of concern that they are moving too far away from the CREA mission in some of the commissioned work and do not want to scatter the CREA resources too broadly.

²⁴ Sall, 2002.

²⁵ National resources are severely constrained and nearly all programs, whether for public health, education, economic development, or other, are inadequately resourced. (Sylla, 2002).

Each of these factors are summarized in the table below, highlighting how similar factors can work to enhance policy influence, or distract from it.

Figure 3: Factors Affecting Policy Influence

	Factors enhancing policy influence	Factors inhibiting policy influence
Key individuals	<p>MIMAP project leader accepted as credible and trustworthy. Considered able to communicate with policy community.</p> <p>IDRC project officer permits flexibility in programmed activities resulting in favourable results.</p> <p>PRSP process designated to most capable person within the Ministry of Statistics rather than “correct” agency.</p>	
Technical Capacities	<p>Competent experts compiled data nationally resulting in greater ownership and improved implementation.</p> <p>National experts lured to international and multilateral agencies <i>may</i> result in influence at the international level.</p> <p>CREA was seen as a competent research centre resulting in the team being involved in the PRSP process.</p>	<p>Over-extended capacity of key people resulting in them not being available when work is needed.</p> <p>Human capital is short in Senegal, and the existing pool is often lured to more lucrative, international work.</p> <p>External offers and staff turnover disrupts the project and its timelines.</p> <p>Suggestions for capacity strategies such as external training or foreign lead researchers may result in brain drain or the project faltering when the lead returns home: loss of ownership.</p>
Perceptions	<p>Policy makers perceive themselves as both researchers and bureaucrats, greater possibilities for collaboration among these actors. Researcher’s work received positively.</p> <p>International recognition of the quality of the PRSP document results in positive local press. Pride.</p> <p>Simply working on the PRSP process offers access to policy influence because of the international recognition.</p>	<p>Researchers are seen as having their “heads in the clouds” and as pertaining to a “closed club”.</p>

Dissemination	<p>Greater visibility for CREA means more credibility and interaction.</p> <p>The “Day of Reflection on the Economy of Senegal” particularly useful format for sharing findings.</p>	Policy makers prefer easily digestible work over long theoretic work.
Timing	<p>A national policy window provides significant opportunity for involving researcher in a collaborative effort.</p> <p>Academics work on less evident long term issues which may become important policy issues in future.</p>	Capacity and institution building takes time – a valuable resource when working under time constraints.
Communications	External stakeholder (CIDA officer) plays a role in bringing the research and policy communities to work together.	Better communications among the research and policy communities are required for a better understanding of what each party needs.
Institutional Issues	IDRC seed money / institutional support helped to develop a strong research centre.	Voiced need for an institutional structure to more formally link this work to government agencies.
National Hurdles		<p>The country’s political, legislative, economic, technical, social issues distract from the efficiency of research infiltrating policy arenas.</p> <p>Few well trained people being over-extended and in demand from external institutions poses difficulties for national institution building.</p>

CONCLUSIONS

MIMAP Senegal started in June 2000 so its trajectory is short compared to that of the Philippines and Bangladesh, the two other MIMAP cases reviewed by IDRC’s bridging research and policy initiative. Policy influence may seem difficult in such a short time period, but that the program became linked to a specific policy process right away set a very favourable environment for the work to be translated into concrete policies.

That the PRSP was not part of MIMAP’s original landscape is a very striking aspects of this study. A number of internal and external factors created a significant policy window which was critical in joining these two efforts, and making the result so successful. Certainly some researchers and some departments are more open to collaboration than others, but the partnership developed was particularly interactive. This is in stark contrast

to other research projects that are particularly dependent on dissemination to reach policy makers and adequately inform them of findings. In this case, an inverse relationship is seen in that the more research is invited into the process, the less dissemination is a critical factor. Dissemination as a concept has a passive connotation that is contrasted with how *mainstream* MIMAP Senegal became. Policy makers became a standing constituency of MIMAP as MIMAP unfolded into the PRSP. Since, the PRSP is serving as a catalyst to improved teamwork and coordination between stakeholders and contributors, and bridging the gap between data, research and decision making.

There was little, if any, competition from other national research centers that could meet the demand at hand. Had the PRSP been given to another entity or persons that were perhaps less capable of making it a success, the lesson that seems to have been learned may not have occurred. As it happens, policy makers are aware of the success, and new processes for policymaking are in the making with hopeful signs of long-term impact on decision making.

CREA and MIMAP are used interchangeably throughout the paper which reflects the very close ties. Similar reference was made indicating government officials feel that the PRSP for them, is MIMAP. The project provided financial flexibility to develop capacity to be used where the need was highest. This has created a supply and demand relationship where government demands for CREA/MIMAP cannot be sufficiently met because of limited supply.

Regardless of whether IDRC funded the specific research that led to the final result or if previous support coupled with the flexibility in regards to the opportunity to work on the PRSP instead of planned MIMAP outputs, the institutional support contributed to what appears to be an ideal environment for the final result – an internationally recognized poverty reduction strategy that was owned by the Senegalese and revered by their neighbours.

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